N°. VII.

THE

THESPIAN MIRROR.

SATURDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 8, 1806.

SKETCH OF THE LIFE OF MRS. MELMOTH.

OUR biographical department for the present week, is devoted to the memoirs of a lady who has appeared in the dramatic world with considerable fame. This short and imperfect sketch is formed from an account recently published in an English magazine of Theatrical Biography; the author of which supposes Mrs. MELMOTH to be the wife of COURTNAY MELMOTH, otherwise known as *Robert Pratt*, a dramatic author and performer of considerable celebrity. Her husband produced a farce called "*Joseph Andrews*," which was performed at Drury Lane theatre in 1778—a tragedy entitled "*The Fair Circassian*" represented at the same theatre in 1780—and the "*School for Vanity*" written in 1783. He was a native of St. Ives, Huntingdonshire (Eng.) and was brought up to the church, but threw off the gown to attempt the stage, and assuming the name of *Melmoth*, played the characters of *Philaster*, and *Hamlet*, at the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden, London, in 1774. His fame as an actor was by no means equal to that as a writer. Such has been the fate of many eminent authors.

"They wrote like *gods*, who could not act like *men*."

Mr. MELMOTH accordingly relinquished the *stage*, and has since produced several plays of merit, besides those enumerated above, which he wrote under the assumed name of *Courtnay*. Many have united these appellations and called him *Courtnay Melmoth*—but his real name is ROBERT PRATT.

Mrs. MELMOTH originally performed in the *Dublin Theatres*, and was a favourite in both tragedy and comedy. When she came to America, she introduced public readings, a species of entertainment, new in this city, where she first landed. Finding this an unprofitable business he took stage, and performed in New-York, Philadelphia and Baltimore.

Her European Biographer relates, that "one season previous to her benefit in Dublin (1786) she reported her intention of becoming a Roman Catholic, and regularly every morning visited chapel, but the receipts of the house not corresponding with her expectations, she found it was likely to be of no advantage to her in *this* world, and therefore she did not think proper to change her road to the *next*."

SOPHIA WOODBINE.

A Tale of Truth from the MSS. of a Lady.

(Continued from page 28.)

I replied to this extraordinary request, by observing that as Alzira and myself could never be happy together, and that as in case I agreed to his proposals while I retained my maiden name, the world would censure and despise me as a concubine, therefore could never coincide with his plan. I further informed him that my affections were directed to another quarter, and tho' I revered him as a father—I could never recognise him as a husband—and thus I left him.

The effect which my words produced on his mind, probably led him to a sense of his faults, and that very night this wretched man was discovered senseless in his room, a bottle of opium near him, and it was concluded he had attempted suicide. Terrified lest I had occasioned his death, I flew to his side, drowned in tears, and imploring Heaven to restore him to himself or otherwise to pardon his murderer!—and uttering a solemn vow that in case he was returned to my arms, nothing but death should part us more! At these words, which proceeded fromthe impressions which the dreadful scene excited in my mind, Harcourt awoke from his horrid dream!

How did the most wretched moments of my life commence....ominous of all my after sufferings. A mutual agreement was that very night drawn up between us, which made me his wife, and secured six months secrecy on my part, at the expiration of which period *Alzira* was to be dismissed, and I was to take the name of Mrs. Harcourt.... On the memorable twenty-second day of November, 1802, fatal to my happiness and peace, in the presence only of GOD, my maid servant, and her mother, (who were all bound to secrecy) *were we united!*

The day after that which consummated our marriage, I was doomed once more to meet my Albert, whom in the variety of affairs which had occupied me since I was called from his company by Harcourt, I had almost forgotten. Judge, if possible, my dear friend, what were the sensations of my heart in retracing the sweet moments we had passed together, and recalling to my mind, that I, who had promised *him* my hand, was now united to Harcourt! Would I were never born, rather than have seen that day! What a conflict of passions aroused in my mind—tears streamed from my eyes—distraction shewed itself in my very look—and my whole manner served only to impress him with astonishment——"For God's sake, Sophia, what's the matter"....O Albert! was all my troubled heart could utter!——A mournful pause ensued——till at length summoning sufficient fortitude to relate to him the incident —I sunk insensibly into his arms.

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(To be continued.)

The American Stage.

*Imitatio vitæ, speculum consuetudinis, imago veritatis.....*Cicero.
The Imitation of Life...the Mirror of Manners...the Transcript of Truth.

THEATRICAL RGISTER.

"'Tis with our judgments, as our watches....none
"Go just alike....but each believes his own."

Monday Evening—Feb. 3....*5th time,* WHO WANTS A GUINEA? (Cotman, jun.); QUAKER, or BENEVOLENT FRIEND (author unknown).

We cannot withhold a tribute of applause from Mrs. JONES for her excellent performance this evening. An unusual attention to what is theatrically called the *by play*, and which is indispensable to a certain degree in any *natural* representation, pervaded her manner throughout both the play and farce. We recommend this circumstance to the imitation of the other members of the Thespian corps—for it is too often that we are compelled to hear our actors recite their parts, as school-boys do their *lessons*, and when they finish speaking, they are *themselves* again.

Wednesday Evening, Feb. 5....2d time, The DUENNA (R. B. Sheridan) FARM HOUSE (opera—I. P. Kemble).

The DUENNA was not got up with so much success this evening as on its first representation....and excepting Mrs. JONES' song, "*Adieu thou dreary pile!*" was but partially applauded. ROBINSON may pride himself upon his half starved monk as his *chef d'ouvre*. Mr. (Don Carlos) though he may do very well in a room, has not voice enough for a *theatre*. Though it is not deficient in *melody* and *sweetness*, is certainly wanting in *strength* and *force*. The afterpiece will bear frequent repetition. YOUNG exerted (and with uncommon success) all his powers of acting. Mrs. JONES was, as usual, enthusiastically applauded ...particularly toward the conclusion where she appears in a military disguise. The fall in the duel, was so natural that many of the auditors imagined her really hurt. Mr. JOHNSON, was, as in general, natural and respectable.

Friday Evening—Feb. 7——a new comedy written by *Eugenius*, gent. of this city—called the WANEDRER.—

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

Ranger,	Mr. *Young*.	Frederick,	*Bailey*.
Harry,	*Martin*.	Longville,	*Tyler*.
Sharp Longville,	*Hogg*.	Courand,	*Robinson*.
O'Dennis,	*Ringwood*.	Jailor,	*Burd*.
Cook,	*Allen*.	Butler,	*Crane*.
Servant,	*Utt*.		

Julia, (the Wanderer, with Songs)	Mrs. *Jones*.
Maria,	*Villiers*.
Betsey, (the Chamber-maid)	*G. Marshall*.
Mrs. Courand,	Miss *White*.
Mrs. O'Dennis,	Mrs. *Simpson*.
Dorothy,	*Wheatley*.

Afterpiece, SPOIL'D CHILD....for the eighth time.

This play the first Dramatic Essay of a young gentlemen of this city, and was honoured by a polite and numerous audience. It was well supported by the performers, particularly Mrs. JONES, but as we have not time to give any particular observations, we shall content ourselves for the present with a sketch of the plot, while we advise the author before its second representation to expunge some of the *offensive* passages, and qualify some others which are at present too obscure and unconnected.

The heroine of the play, by the intrigues of her uncle is stolen from her father at the age of two years—false representations, and artful imposition induced the father to believe that his child was drowned.—The heroine is brought to our view—She is turned out, by the accomplices of her uncle, upon the world without friend or relation—Is beset by profli-

gates—is rescued by a man of virtue, conducted to her father as a protector, and introduced to him as a stranger)—sixteen years absence, being supposed to obliterate all remembrance of the father in respect of his child)—He promises her protection as a man of benevolence—She is torn from him by profligates, conducted to a tavern and lulled into security by their falshood. One of the profligates being likely to lose his mistress, in consequence of his mal-conduct,—repents his conduct, and discovers to her the retreat of the heroine. She becomes interested—assumes the guise of a man, and passing for her brother, rescues her from infamy. The *repentant* profligate *searches* out the man by whom the heroine had been formerly secreted—finds him in prison, liberates and conducts him to the heroine. The man, thus liberated, confesses the whole mystery to the parties of the play. The heroine is restored to the bosom of her father.

Gen. EATON honoured the Theatre with his presence last evening. He appeared unnsually delighted at the charming exhibition of *Little Pickle*.

" *SWEET* CHARITY ! *thou sprite benign,—*
" *Who oft art seen in angel form,*
" *To point the sun beam where to shine,*
" *Or rein the coursers of the storm !*
" *Oh ! thro' yon dark and dripping cell,*
" *Where sorrow's outcast-offspring weep,*
" FLASH, *as when* PETERS' *fetters fell,*
" *And bid the* WOES THAT GUARD THEM SLEEP."

PAINE.

THE proposal of BENEVOLUS, in the 4th number of the Thespian Mirror, addressed to the Benevolent, cannot fail of being approved by the charitably disposed part of the community. In London the " Theatrical Fund, which has been a considerable time established, has been productive of much utility, not only in rescuing distressed players from misery, but in affording to their indigent families, an asylum from poverty and ruin.

Prosperity is as uncertain as life,...and among *Actors* it is particularly precarious. It is therefore the more essential that such an institution should be founded, as may afford a resource to the distressed families of spenthrift Actors—So that a tender offspring should not suffer by the imprudence of neglectful parents nor *disabled* and *unfortunate* parents want a refuge from penury, for themselves and children.

The advantages which the plan proposed could afford, are too obvious to require an extension of our remarks.

Suffice it then for the present to say, we conclude these remarks with an offer of every assistance in our power, relative to the prosecution of the laudable undertaking: and for this purpose the EDITOR of the THESPIAN MIRROR respectfully gives notice, that any person disposed to forward the design can leave their address at the Printing-Office No. 2, Wall-street....and when a sufficient number of names are subscribed, a meeting can be called, where the plan may be considered of at leisure, and such measures be suggested as on mature deliberation may be deemed expedient for its future support and direction.

The editor of one of the papers has favored us with the following communication, presented for insertion in his paper, but omitted on account of a press of other matter. It is the production of a great dramatic author, to whom this city has acknowledged many obligations for the *instruction* and *entertainment* which his *unrivalled* productions have frequenty afforded its inhabitants. The perspicuity and elegance of his style—the correctness of his *orthography*—the harmony of his poetic lines—and above all the sublimity of the comparisons of this great luminary of learning, must at once strike every discerning reader, who will join with the EDITOR in hoping that the transcendent genius of the great author of the POET IN PETTICOATS, and the SPRIGHTLY WIDOW, will receive the compensation from a liberal publie, which such a combination of talent and literature really deserves.

A the City Hotel

ON tuesday evening the 28 Inst. was performed for the benefit of Mr. Charles Gilfort a Concert of Musick

Mr. Hewit playeed a Concerto on the Violin with his usual skill, this excellent performer in the protecting of genius he is the means of introducing an amusement that affords the company an opportunity of exercising their talents he then politely leaves them to regale in festive mirth well calculated to promote health and happiness at this inclement season of the year——

The Young German that played on the Bassoon performed with a taste that commands admiration Mr. Chapter cannot fail to attrack publick notice his fort is to sing base—We cannot say that this gentlemans admirable figure is supported by the gracess, it is to be hoped he'll take the hint and take patern from Cooper or a Young or any other Gentleman of an easy address

Mrs. Jones in her performance differed so much from her usual display of talents that we can with truth say that her voice was reduced to the standard of a fine Mettle bell crack'd by the frost——

We are happy to hear that this Lady is in a fair way of recovery and will soon display her admirable vocal powers, and may the Charmer in her turn feel the pleasing effects of a good benefit——

Mr. Charles Gilfert was alert in his performance their appeared a modest devidence in the youth that may be got the better of by practice in polite company—It is to be hoped this young gentleman will meet with the encouragement in his professional line his great talents merit, for we may truly say whilst England boasts of her ROCIUS in his teens we may rejoice at the acquisition of a youthful HANDEL

It is generly understood that Mr. Gelferts pupils are well pleased with his easy mode of introducing them into social life——

To conclude I dare engage to say this mode of entertainment affords so much innocent pleasure, that Mr. Gilfert will not want for encouragement on the like occasion as he is determined, his conduct shall merit a future countenance——

Where sportive innocence their Sires delight,
In polite groups on a social night,
With grace in their steps to conclude with ease,
A display of sense is a Charm that please,
For were are the a Miture* are combind,
It is with skill they Charm the human mind.

Extempore by an
* *Amatuer.* AMITUERE.

LUDICROUS associations are sometimes powerful enough to overcome the most painful sentiments, and convert into sources of laughter, topics of the most melancholy nature. The famous Doctor Arbuthnot, who was no less remarkable for the extent of his genius, than for the conscientious decocorum of his manners, was passing by where a croud had collected to dig out the body of a bricklayer, who had been buried by the fall of a *chimney* which he had just *completed*. "The moment that I was told of the manner of his death," says the Doctor, "the following passage of our funeral service occurred to my recollection; 'blessed are the dead for they die in the Lord; they rest from their *labours*, and their *works* do *follow them*:' and, rejoins the Doctor, "so convulsed was I with laughter, that I found it necessary immediately to withdraw, and ever after, when this unfortunate catastrophe was mentioned, the same impulse rushed irresistibly upon me." B.

Poetry.

For the Thespian Mirror.

TO MY LITTLE DAUGHTER EVIRALLIN,

ON HER RECOVERY FROM ILLNESS.

AGAIN, dear Babe, th' unfolding rose,
On thy soft cheek, its blushes throws;
Again thine eyes blue lustre streams,
And gay health dances in its beams;
Again to bless my list'ning ear,
More sweet than music's tone I hear,
Thine infant voice—its cheerful sound
Bids my fond heart with rapture bound—
Its half-form'd accents wildly gay,
Chase each corroding care away;
Each fear that late my soul opprest,
And robb'd my eyes of balmy rest,
Or if some broken slumber threw
Its spell around my aching head,
In horrid visions full of woe,
I saw thee ghastly, pale and dead.
Enough of grief, that now is past,
Back from my view those scenes I cast;
For blooming health and sportive grace,
Returning, animate thy face;
And sweetly smiling, seem to say,
That years on years shall pass away,
Ere either blessing feel decay.

CLARA.

THEATRICAL INTELLIGENCE.

The Theatre in *Boston* continues its attractions. Mr. COOPER sustains the first line in tragedy; to which Messrs. USHER and FOX are secondary. Mrs POWELL is the tragedy heroine, and Mrs. DARLEY succeeds to the place of Mrs. JONES; Mr. DARLEY is the support of the musical department, and BERNARD, TWAITS and DICKENSON are the heroes of low comedy and farce.

At Boston, the 17th ult. a person on entering one of the boxes in the *third row* of the theatre, stumbled on one of the seats, struck the front of the box with his breast, and fell headlong into the Pit. It is remarkable that he sustained no serious injury;—but a person in the Pit, who received the shock, we understand had his arm broken.

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